

OFFICE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION
STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

FEBRUARY 23, 2010
1:15 PM

VETERANS' MEMORIAL AUDITORIUM
5825 FLORIDA BOULEVARD
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The regular monthly Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Fletcher at 1:15 P.M.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Joey Breaux.

Members present: Chairman Randell Fletcher, Ernest Girouard, Ed Yerger, John Compton, and George Guillory

Members absent: Garland Colvin
A quorum was present.

Others Present: Kevin Norton, USDA-NRCS State Conservationist; Dwight Landreneau, LSU Ag Center; Brad Spicer, LDAF/SSWCC Executive Director; Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC; Laura Edwards, LDAF-OSWC; and Sherrill Sagrera, Vermilion SWCD.

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Compton to give the invocation.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Fletcher called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2010 State Commission meeting.

Motion: Mr. Guillory made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 13, 2010 Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Compton and passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Fletcher said they would next take up Unfinished Business and requested Mr. Spicer to report on the items listed on the agenda.

SWCD Farm Bill Implementation Report

Mr. Spicer said that several districts are behind schedule on earning their Farm Bill funds. He said that as directed by the Commission, he sent notices to those districts that their funds would be swept in early March and redistributed to the districts that have heavier workloads and are out of Farm Bill funds.

Mr. Spicer said they are still in the process of entering the new Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement data into the system. He said that the formula for distributing the Farm Bill funds has been adjusted to better reflect the actual workload associated with managing Farm Bill programs and implementing the associated conservation measures. He said Mr. Norton will provide details about the new formulas that the NRCS is using to allocate the funds to the SWCDs.

LACD and NACD Annual Meetings

Chairman Fletcher asked Dr. Girouard to report on this item. Dr. Girouard said the LACD Legislative Sessions were extremely insightful. He said Mr. Jerry Guillot, Chief of Staff, Louisiana Senate did a fine job of explaining the “sausage making” of how a bill becomes law, the budget process and the Capital Outlay Procedures and Constitutional limits. Dr. Girouard said the handouts that Mr. Guillot had were very clear, concise and helpful. He said he was impressed by how well Mr. Guillot knew the SWCDs strong points and was very well informed on the important issues concerning the conservation districts. He said actually, both legislative sessions were very good; in both sessions the speakers were well prepared and the questions were answered well. He said a number of legislators understand how districts operate because they have worked with districts and some of them own farmland.

Dr. Girouard said the NACD meeting in Orlando, Florida was well attended, but not as well as when it was held in New Orleans. He said the reason may have been because Orlando is expensive. He said the meeting was very fast paced and they really kept busy. Dr. Girouard said that Mr. Earl Garber really represented Louisiana very well. He said that Mr. Garber is very knowledgeable and was well prepared and that he even got some applause on certain subjects he was speaking on.

Dr. Girouard said most actions at the meeting were well received, but one was controversial, the election procedures of executive officers. He said a task force was created to make recommendations for change, but their recommendations were not well received, so another task force was established to again review the election procedures. He said it was universally agreed that if an officer was in a position of succession to a higher position but he wanted to also run for another office, he should resign his current position in order to run for the other office; no one should be able to run for another position if they are currently holding an elected position.

Mr. Norton said that Louisiana’s leadership is recognized and respected nationwide for their knowledge and they all do an excellent job of representing Louisiana. He said he appreciates the close working relationship the districts have with NRCS and the cooperative partnerships among other agencies in Louisiana. He said this close working relationship is not the case in some other states and he really appreciates the willingness for others to work together for the common good of our conservation program and the cliental we serve. Mr. Norton said he will continue to support the districts and the OSWC as much as he can in every way.

Dr. Girouard said Mr. Jeff Eisenberg is the new Chief Executive Officer of NACD and that the NACD 2011 Annual meeting will be held in Nashville, Tennessee. He said he also wanted to thank Mr. John Compton for all of his hard work and his many years of service with NACD. Chairman Fletcher said, and other Commission members agreed, the LACD Annual Meeting was one of the best meetings content wise that they have attended.

Dr. Girouard said there will be an NACD conference call on April 3, 2010 and if anyone had items they wished to be discussed, please contact him, Mr. Bruce Frazier or Mr. John Compton with the information. He said that the South Central Region Directors will also have a conference call on the same day, April 3rd.

Dr. Girouard said he also wanted to mention that the Vermilion SWCD won a \$10,000 National Conservation Award. He said the district, in partnership with the school board, LSU AgCenter, 4-H’ers in eleven parishes, NRCS and others, won the award for their on-the-ground community project to teach the importance of implementing healthy conservation measures.

Revised PPM #13 for Supervisors Training

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Breaux to present the revised PPM #13, *Supervisors Training*.

Mr. Breaux said that the Soil & Water Conservation Commission PPM #13 has been revised to reflect the Commission's decision made at the last meeting to conduct the required district supervisor's trainings by Area; to conduct one training session in each of the 5 areas per year, with priority given to conducting the trainings in conjunction with the LACD Area Meetings. Mr. Breaux said that in the event that the LACD Area Vice President elects not to have the training session in conjunction with the LACD Area Meeting, he would work with the Commission's members of that area, and the individual SWCDs, to determine the most favorable time and location for the training session.

Motion: Mr. Guillory made a motion to approve the amended State Commission's PPM #13, Supervisors Training to hold supervisors training sessions in conjunction with the five annual LACD Area Meetings or if warranted, to schedule supervisors training sessions on another date. The motion was seconded by Mr. Compton and passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Fletcher said they will now take up New Business and asked Mr. Norton to give the NRCS Report.

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Mr. Norton said that Mr. Brad Sticker was appointed as State Conservation Engineer, to fill the vacancy when Mr. Ed Giering retired and that Ms. Sarah Haymaker was appointed Assistant State Conservationist of Operations, filling the vacancy made when Mr. Ron Marcantel retired. He said that Mr. Steve Carmichael will be retiring on April 2, 2010. Mr. Norton said these employees were going to retire when Mr. Gohmert left, but put their retirement on hold to stay and help him with a smooth transition and to make sure he was firmly grounded before they retired. He said he really appreciated them and all the assistance they provided. He handed out copies of the February Conservation Update and an EQIP Allocation for FY 2010. Mr. Norton said that he would now present a PowerPoint presentation detailing the changes in the formula used to distribute Farm Bill technical assistance funds. Mr. Norton said that the changes in the formula better reflect the overall workload associated with planning and implementing Farm Bill measures and the work associated with processing cliental paper work.

Mr. Norton said this concluded his report.

Correspondence

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Spicer to continue with the agenda items under Correspondence.

Mr. Spicer said that the first item under correspondence is a Cooperative Endeavor Agreement between the DeSoto Parish Police Jury and the DeSoto SWCD that provides funding to the district to support district technician salary. Mr. Spicer said that the agreement is actually an extension of the current agreement the DeSoto SWCD has with the DeSoto Police Jury. Chairman Fletcher called for a motion to approve the Cooperative Endeavor Agreement.

Motion: Mr. Compton made a motion to approve the DeSoto SWCD Cooperative Endeavor Agreement with the DeSoto Parish Police Jury. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

Mr. Spicer said the next item is a response letter from the State Commission to Mr. George Dauzat, Chairman of the Calcasieu SWCD regarding funding sources for the State Soil and Water Conservation Program. He said the letter clarifies the misinformation on state funding the Calcasieu SWCD was provided by one of their State Representatives. Mr. Spicer said apparently the legislator misinterpreted the district's request regarding funding of Soil and Water Conservation.

Mr. Spicer said the next item is a copy of a resolution offered by Police Jury member Mrs. Jane Netterville and adopted by the Tensas Parish Police Jury regarding proposed budget cuts to the State Soil and Water Conservation Program. He said the resolution recognizes the importance of the work carried out by the 44 SWCDs in partnership with USDA/NRCS and that additional cuts to the state conservation program would jeopardize federal revenues the district assists in bringing into the state, resulting in jobs being lost and the loss of protection to the states soil and water resources. He said the resolution requests that no additional cuts be made to the State Soil and Water Conservation Program and as soon as feasible that funding be restored to the FY 2008 level. Mr. Spicer said that he has discussed the resolution with Mr. Richard Netterville, member of the Tensas Concordia SWCD and asked him to thank Mrs. Netterville and the Tensas Police Jury for their support of the State Soil and Water Conservation Program.

Chairman Fletcher said that the Commission will send a letter to the Tensas Policy Jury thanking them for their support.

Mr. Spicer said the next item is a listing of the dates and locations of the nine LDAF Outreach Sessions being held in March. He said that he would like to thank the NRCS and especially Ms. Holly Martien for her assistance in the planning and construction of the Office of Soil and Water Conservation's exhibit for the Outreach Sessions. Mr. Spicer said he is encouraging district supervisors and district and NRCS employees to attend the sessions. He said he is also asking districts to inform the general public about the sessions and to also encourage them to attend the sessions.

Mr. Spicer said the next item is a copy of a NASDA eNEWS that has two articles that are important to Louisiana. He said on the first page is an article covering the introduction of a Senate Resolution asking EPA to stop their efforts to regulate greenhouse gases under the Clean Air Act. Mr. Spicer said that resolutions do not create new law and therefore does not keep EPA from going forward with efforts to regulate greenhouse gases. He said that each Commission member has a copy of the resolution in their folders. Mr. Spicer said the other article discusses the concerns that 53 commodity groups and producers have with activist groups urging EPA to re-evaluate recently completed re-registration of the herbicide Atrazine. He said also included in correspondence is an article from the Delta Farm Press that outlines Commissioner Strain's position on a number of issues including water management, cap and trade proposals being considered by Congress and that Louisiana is on the brink of declaring the boll weevil eradicated.

Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and if not, that concluded correspondence.

Supervisor Resignations/Appointments and Reappointments

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Spicer to report on the resignations and appointments. Mr. Spicer reported on the resignation of the following supervisors: Mr. Rodger Coody, elected position, East Carroll SWCD; and Mr. Matt Miller, elected position, St. Landry SWCD.

Motion: Mr. Yerger made a motion to accept the resignation of supervisors Mr. Rodger Coody, elected position, East Carroll SWCD and Mr. Matt Miller, elected position, St. Landry SWCD. The motion was seconded by Mr. Compton and passed unanimously.

Mr. Spicer said the respective conservation districts are requesting the State Commission to appoint the following supervisors to a new term in office:

Catahoula SWCD, Mr. Aaron Wade reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin March 28, 2010 and will expire on March 28, 2013.

Desoto SWCD, Mr. Jerry Holmes reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin March 23, 2010 and will expire on March 23, 2013.

Dorcheat SWCD, Ms. Harol T. Thompson reappointed to fill her expired appointed position. Term will begin March 22, 2010 and will expire on March 22, 2013.

Rapides SWCD, Mr. Jim T. Harper appointed to fill unexpired elected position of Mr. Woodrow Young. Term will begin February 23, 2010 and will expire on June 30, 2011.

Sabine SWCD, Mr. John Alan Williams reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin March 23, 2010 and will expire on March 23, 2013.

St. Landry SWCD, Mr. Kirt Bollich to fill vacant elected position of Mr. Matt Miller. Term will begin February 23, 2010 and will expire on June 30, 2011.

West Carroll SWCD, Mr. Alton Welch, Jr. reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin February 24, 2010 and will expire on February 24, 2013.

Motion: Dr. Girouard made a motion to approve the appointments of supervisors Mr. Aaron Wade, appointed position, Catahoula SWCD; Mr. Jerry Holmes, appointed position, Desoto SWCD; Ms. Harol Thompson, appointed position, Dorcheat SWCD; Mr. Jim T. Harper, elected position, Rapides SWCD; Mr. John Alan Williams, appointed position, Sabine SWCD; Mr. Kirt Bollich, elected position, St. Landry SWCD and Mr. Alton Welch, Jr., appointed position, West Carroll SWCD. The motion was seconded by Mr. Guillory and passed unanimously.

2010 Regular Session of the Legislature

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Spicer to address this item. Mr. Spicer said, for the Commission members information, the 2010 Regular Legislative Session will convene at noon on Monday, March 29, 2010 and will end no later than 6:00 PM on Monday, June 21, 2010. He said all bills are to be filed by March 29th.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Fletcher asked if there was any other business to come before the Commission. Mr. Dwight Landreneau said although higher education was not going to suffer additional cuts, in reality they were cut over \$6 million at the mid-year budget cut, so they will begin the year with less funding and since all unfunded mandates will be taken from the funding, this will be another \$5 million cut. He said they have lost almost 400 employees statewide, with 58 retired or resigned from service, but there have been no terminations. He said programs will have to be eliminated or downsized and they have identified those programs and they are ready to make tough decisions if need be to deal with the budget cuts.

Dr. Girouard thanked everyone for the Master Farmer Awards Program. He said Mr. Norton and staff, Mr. Spicer and staff, and the Ag Center all helped with the Master Program Awards and each year it gets better. He said this year there was not only a husband and wife team winner, but a father/son/son-in-law team winner.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Fletcher said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for 1:15 PM Tuesday, March 23, 2010 in the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge Louisiana.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Fletcher asked if there was any other business or comments. None replied. Mr. Spicer said they had just received word that Mr. Charlie Dupuy's grandson, Brad Smith had died from a heart attack and the funeral services will be Thursday, February 25, 2010, at the Philadelphia Baptist Church in Pineville, Louisiana.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Fletcher said if there was no other business that he will accept a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Mr. Guillory made a motion to adjourn at 2:24 P.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ *Randell Fletcher*

Randell Fletcher, Chairman
State Soil and Water Conservation Commission